A

SERMON

Preached on the 28th. of *June*,

AT

St *GILES* in the *Fields*,

BY

John Sharp, D.D.

Arch-Biſhop of *YORK* Elect,

At his leaving ỹ Pariſh.

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Philip. iv. 8.

Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any vertue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.

I Have the two laſt Lord's Days, made it my buſineſs to treat of this Text, in a way that I thought did moſt tend to the informing your Judgments: And to that purpoſe I have raiſed ſeveral Obſervations, and drawn ſeveral Inferences from it.

I mean now to Treat of it in another way, and to apply my ſelf wholly to the preſſing you to the Practice of it.

And indeed the Nature of the Sermon I am to make, doth call for this from me. For I am now to take my leave of you; this being the laſt time in all probability that I ſhall Preach among you as your Miniſter: And therefore I ſuppoſe good Advice and Exhortation will more become me at this time, than a cloſe Diſcourſe upon a Text.

And yet, my Text doth afford matter enough, without ſtraining it, for ſuch a purpoſe: Nor indeed do

do I know a Text in the Bible, that I could æorm willingly pitch upon to leave with you, as the laſt advice I would give you, and as the Sum and Concluſion of my Preaching among you; than theſe Words of St. *Paul* I have now read to you.

Let me therefore at this time addreſs my ſelf to you all, as the Apoſtle here did at the concluſion of his Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, *Finally Brethren whatſoever things are true*, &c.

Here are a great many things recommended by the Apoſtle to our thoughts and purſuit. If we would make a diſtribution of them, I believe they will all naturally enough fall under theſe *Four* Heads. For the *things* here recommended are not ſo many as the *words* by which they are expreſſſt; there being ſeveral Words uſed in this Enumeration, that are of the ſame importance, and ſeem to expreſs much the ſame thing. The *Four* Heads I would reduce them to are theſe,

I. *A Conſtant Adherence to the true Religion.*

II. *Honeſty and Juſtice in our Dealings.*

III. *A Life of ſtrict* Purity, *in oppoſition to* Senſuality and Lewdneſs.

IV. *The Adorning the Doctrine of God we do profeſs, by the conſtant Practice of every other thing that is Virtuous or Commendable, or well thought of by Mankind.*

This, as I take it, is a fair account of the Parts of this Text: and theſe I ſhall make the Heads of my following Exhortation.

I begin with the firſt. *Finally my Brethren whatſoever things are true, think on thoſe things.*

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The *Truths* that S. *Paul* here exhorts them to think on are undoubtedly the *Truths* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which he had delivered to them. These he would have them to think upon, and persist in, and never to be prevailed upon by any Temptation to depart from them.

Let me now apply this Advice of his to you. It is the particular Blessing of God to this Kingdom, and an inestimable Blessing it is, that he has not only vouchsafed us the Light of his Gospel for many years, but He has also taken Care that the *Truths* of it should be delivered to us with greater Purity and Sincerity, and freer from the mixtures of Errour than to most, I was going to say, than to any other People in the World.

If it lay in your way to make observations concerning the State of Religion in other Countreys; nay or but to read the Accounts that are given of it: I am sure you would be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this Church are, above all the other Churches in Christendom.

O therefore let us all firmly adhere to the *Truths* we have been taught; to the *Truths* we have hitherto made Profession of. And let us firmly adhere to that *Church* which hath held forth these *Truths* to us, and taught us this Profession.

We do not pretend that any Church is Infallible, and therefore not ours: But this we dare say and we can justifie; that if we take our measures concerning the Truths of Religion from the Rules of the Holy Scriptures, and the Platform of the Primitive Churches

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the Church of *England* is undoubtedly both as to Doctrine and Worship, the Pureſt Church that is at this day in the World; the moſt Orthodox in Faith, and the freeſt on the one hand from *Idolatry* and *Superſtition*, and on the other hand from *Freakiſhneſs* and *Enthuſiaſm* of any now extant.

Nay I do farther ſay with great ſeriouſneſs, and as one that expects to be called to account at the dreadful Tribunal of God for what I now ſay, if I do not ſpeak in ſincerity: That I do in my Conſcience believe, that if the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt, as it is deliver'd in the New Teſtament, be the true Religion (as I am certain it is:) Then the Communion of the Church of *England* is a ſafe way to Salvation, and the ſafeſt of any I know in the World.

And therefore I do exhort you all in the Name of God, ſtedfaſtly to hold and to perſerve in this Communion.

Here you have the *Things that are true.* Think of them and embrace them heartily; and Live and Die in the Profeſſion of them. This is the Doctrine I have always Taught you, and by the Grace of God I mean to Practiſe accordingly.

II. The next thing I have to recommend to you from theſe words of the Apoſtle is Univerſal *Honeſty* and *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs* in your Converſation. *Whatſoever things* (ſaith he) *are true, whatſoever things are honeſt*; *whatſoever things are juſt*; think on theſe things.

You ſee I join theſe two words *Honeſt* and *Juſt* together, as importing the ſame thing. Tho yet I

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am aware that the word we here render *Honeſt* is often uſed in another ſignification, that is to ſay for *Grave* or *Venerable*: But ſince that other ſignification falls in moſt properly under my laſt Head, I wave it here and take the word as our Tranſlation renders it.]

Indeed it is in vain to expect any advantage from our profeſſion of the *Truth*, if we be not ſincerely *Juſt* and *Honeſt* in our Actions.

Whoſoever can allow himſelf in the practice of any diſhoneſt, knaviſh, indirect Dealing, let that Man be never ſo Orthodox in his Belief and Opinions; yet I am ſure he is no true Chriſtian.

O therefore let me exhort you all, whatever Intereſts you have to ſerve; whatever Dealings you are ingaged in, to be always ſtrictly *Juſt* and *Upright* iu your Converſation. Uſe no Tricks, practiſe no ill Arts for the ſerving your ends, but in all your tranſactions with Men, deal with that Simplicity and Integrity and good Conſcience, that becomes thoſe who would be accounted the Diſciples of Him who was the moſt Innocent, the moſt Sincere, and the leaſt Intrigueing Perſon in the World.

Aſſure your ſelves no diſhoneſty can proſper long. Whatever turns you may ſerve by it at preſent, yet you will bitterly repent of it ſome time or other. But Righteouſneſs and Juſtice doth eſtabliſh a mans ways. And the upright Man, tho he is not always the richeſt, yet always walketh moſt ſurely. And as for the final event of things; Remember this that God Almighty has pronounced that *no Unrighteous* men, *no Covetous*, *no Liars*, *no Extortioners ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. But to go on.

III. The next thing I have to exhort you to from the words of my Text is the Practice of *Purity*. For after the Apostle hath recommended the pursuit of *things* that are *true*, and the things that are *honest* and *just*, he next adds the things that are *pure*. Meaning hereby that we should study to be pure and chast and temperate both in our Hearts and Lives; avoiding all Excesses, and Lewdness, and Sensuality.

And if he thought it convenient in that Age of strictness and severity and devotion, to put the Christians in mind of this: I am sure it is not only convenient but necessary to do it, in this Age of ours, when Luxury and Debauchery, when Whoredom and Drunkenness, and all sorts of Vices that are contrary to *Purity*, are grown to that height among us, that we seem to defie God Almighty by our impudent Practice of them, and provoke Him to give us up to Destruction.

I pray God make the whole Nation deeply sensible of the Folly and Wickedness, as well as of the danger and dreadful Consequences of these Practices. And as for you who are here present, let me bespeak ou in the Words of the Apostle; *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* I beseech you as you have any Honor for your Lord and Master, as you have any regard to the preservation of a Sense of Religion in your Minds, as you have any concern for your Health, for your Estates, for your Families; as you have any respect to the Publick, that Effeminacy and Sottishness and Diseases may not be entailed upon our Posterity; lastly as you love your own

Souls

Souls, and hope ever to ſee the face of God in Heaven, learn to live Soberly, learn to live Chaſtly, learn to practiſe Purity and Temperance in all your Converſation. Avoid Whoredom and Drunkenneſs as you would the Plague, for certainly they are the worſt of Plagues to them that uſe them: For other Plagues do only put our Bodies in danger, but theſe do endanger both our Souls and Bodies. Nay as to the one (I mean our Souls) they will prove certain inevitable Deſtruction without Repentance and Reformation.

I know theſe things are made ſlight Matters of by a great many among us. But aſſure your ſelves God will not account them ſo; it is certain he will not, if we may believe his Word; for it is there told us expreſly that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* And withal, that *neither Adulterers, nor Fornicators, nor unclean Perſons, nor Drunkards ſhall ever inherit the Kingdom of God or of Chriſt.*

IV. I proceed to the laſt Head of Advice that is given in my Text. The Apoſtle having inſtanced in *Three* things neceſſary to be daily thought upon and purſued by all Chriſtians, *viz. Truth* and *Honeſty* and *Purity*, leaves off to meddle any farther with particulars, and ſums up the reſt of his Advice in generals. And that ſum comes to this, that as we are Chriſtians we ſhould not only take care of the three forementioned things, but ſhould make it our buſineſs to improve our ſelves in every other ſort of Virtue; nay in every other ſort of thing that is *Praiſe-worthy*, or that is well eſteemed of among Mankind. So that really it ſhould be the endeavor of our Lives to render our ſelves as excellent and as exemplary for all ſorts of a-

miable Qualities as it is possible for men to be in this World.

This I take to be the full meaning of those *four* expressions that follow in my Text, *Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think of these things.*

And now Brethren, see from hence what your Obligations are. You that have such a glorious Light vouchsafed you; such unvaluable Promises, such mighty Assistances made over to you by the Gospel of Christ: You must in Reason imagine that in return of these great Advantages, great things are expected from you.

It will not satisfie your Engagements, that you do believe and profess the Gospel, that you do no wrong to your Neighbours, that you are neither given to Lewdness nor Drunkenness, (tho yet even these, as the World goes, are very great things, and could all Men that profess Christianity truly say this of themselves, we should soon see Heaven upon Earth) But your Christianity obliges you to aspire after greater things; you must get your selves possessed of the whole Circle of Virtues; you must be *Kind* and *Charitable*, as well as *Just* and *Honest*; you must be *Modest* and *Meek* and *Humble*, as well as *Temperate* and *Chast*.

Nay not only so, but you are to labour after all these several Virtues, in the full Latitude and Extent of them, even to that degree that every thing which hath but the *appearance of Evil* is to be avoided by you. You are not only to abstain from Acts of Injustice, but even from doing a *hard* thing to any one; you are not only to keep your selves within the known

Limits of Temperance and Chaſtity, but to avoid all thoſe things that border upon the Vices oppoſite thereunto, and ſo as to all other inſtances; If a thing be of *ill Report*, and looks infamouſly to the ſober part of Mankind, why that very Conſideration is enough to deter you from the Practice of it; For you are to recommend your Religion to all the Men in the World, by all the ways that are poſſible.

In a Word you are to endeavor to be as free from blame in your whole Converſation as you poſſibly can, and not only ſo, but to be as good, and to do as much good as your Circumſtances will allow you.

This now is to be a Chriſtian indeed; by thus endeavouring you truly walk worthy of that high and heavenly Calling, wherewith you are called, and you do (as the Apoſtle adviſes) *adorn the Doctrine of God in all things*; and happy, extreamly happy are they that do thus, for great is their Reward: Great even in this World in the ſolid Peace and Aſſurance of Gods Favor which they here enjoy, and which indeed far exceeds all the Bleſſings that the Earth can afford; but exceedingly great in the Life to come, when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall come with all the Powers of Heaven to do Honor to thoſe that have thus here honoured him.

Thus have I gone through all the parts of my Text, but I do not think that I ought ſo to leave it. I have given you an account of the things that St. *Paul* hath here directed us to, to be the main purſuit of our Lives. But I think likewiſe it will be proper to ſpeak ſomething of the Methods of that purſuit, or the

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means which we are to obſerve, if we would practiſe this Text; and here I am to begin anew with my Advices. Several things I have to repreſent upon this Occaſion and to exhort you to. I am not much ſolicitous, whether they ſtrictly belong to my Argument or no. But I deſire to leave them with you, as things that I judge to be very uſeful, and which I wiſh may be ever remembred by you.

And the *Firſt* thing I would exhort you to is this, *That you would endeavour to poſſeſs your Minds with a hearty Senſe of God Almighty, and the abſolute Neceſſity of being ſeriouſly Religious.*

I do not mention this, as if I thought there was any need to caution you againſt *Atheiſm* or *Infidelity*, for I hope not many among us are inclined that way. Mankind are naturally diſpoſed to believe a God and Religion, and ſince through God's Bleſſing it is *Chriſtianity* that is the Religion of our Country, and in which we have been all Educated: I look upon an *Atheiſt* or an *Infidel* among us, to be a ſort of *Prodigy*, a ſtrange unuſual Creature, vaſtly different from thoſe of his own Kind.

But here is the thing. Though moſt of us profeſs Religion and the true Religion, yet many of us have no lively or hearty Senſe of it. We uſe Religion as we do our Cloths. They are very convenient, nay perhaps neceſſary, and therefore we wear them, and for the particular form or mode of them we follow, as to that, the Cuſtom of the Countrey where we live. Yet as the Cloths we wear do not alter the Complexion or Features of our Body, ſo neither doth

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the Religion we Profeſs any more affect the Temper of our Souls. We ſerve our ſelves in both Caſes of the outward Conveniencies that are to be had by them, but we are ſtill the ſame to our Perſons both as outward and inward Lineaments.

But alas this is a very ſorry way of being Religious and will do us no great kindneſs. We may perhaps reap ſome ſecular advantages by it, but yet even the very trouble and pains it puts us to, do equal the Conveniencies we have from it. The Men that live thus, are juſt ſerved like thoſe that work in rich Mines. They are daily imploied about Gold and Silver or Gems, and they work hard, and they have their days wages for their Labour, but they are not a whit the richer for the Treaſures that come into their hands.

Your Religion will never ſerve you to any extraordinary purpoſes, till your Hearts be affected with it as well as your Underſtandings. Let me therefore adviſe you, as you love either your Happineſs in this World, or in the next, make it your principal care to get a lively and vigorous Senſe of God impreſſed upon your Minds. And look upon it as the greateſt Intereſt you have to carry on, the greateſt Buſineſs you have to do in this World (as it really is) to approve your ſelves to this God by a ſincere endeavour in all your Converſation, to walk as his Son Jeſus Chriſt hath taught you. If you do this, you will certainly find the Sweet and Comfort of it both here and hereafter.

When all is ſaid, it is a vain thing for any man to expect a tolerable eaſie paſſage through this World, unleſs he have the Hopes of Gods Favour to ſupport him under the Multitude of evil Accidents which the State of Humane Life will neceſſarily expoſe him to. And as for the other World, without theſe Hopes he is perfectly loſt: And to be able to entertain any rational Hopes of God's Bleſſing and Favour, is

a very vain thing likewiſe, unleſs we make it our buſineſs with our whole Hearts and Souls to ſerve and pleaſe and obey Him.

There are a great many Rules and Maxims that we uſe to give to our Friends or our Children for the making their Fortunes, and I cannot deny but they are exceeding good ones. Thus for inſtance, we adviſe them to get a true underſtanding of their Buſineſs, and to purſue it diligently, to keep out of ill Company, to avoid Drinking or Gaming and Lewdneſs, and to ſtudy the Tempers and Humors of Mankind, and to learn to apply themſelves dexterouſly to thoſe they have occaſion to converſe with; why theſe and ſuch others are excellent Rules and moſt worthy of all Men to be ſtudied and practiſed. But ſtill there is one Rule above all theſe, and without which all the other will ſignifie very little to the making a Mans Life eaſie and comfortable; and that is to preſerve a lively ſenſe of God upon our Spirits, to have his Fear always before our Eyes, to love him above all things, to value his Favor more than Life, and to dread his Diſpleaſure as the worſt of Evils. If we can but once get our Souls into this frame, we have done our Buſineſs both for this World and for Eternity; All the other particular Rules and Advices will be in a great meaſure ſuperfluous; for he that is poſſeſſed of this good Principle will of courſe naturally fall into the practice of them. And beſides this Fear and Love of God in our Hearts, as it is the moſt effectual means, according to the uſual Diſpoſition of the Divine Providence, to put us into good Circumſtances of Living; ſo it is the only means of making our Circumſtances happy to us, if they be good; or of making them eaſie and ſupportable, if they be bad.

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I do therefore moſt earneſtly recommend it to you, as you deſire that either you or yours may proſper, nay, as you would not be very miſerable; be not contented with a ſuperficial outſide Religion, but affect your minds as deeply as is poſſible with a ſenſe of God, and what you owe to him; and endeavour to impreſs the ſame ſenſe upon your Friends and Children, and all that are about you. The truth of it is, ſo much doth our preſent happineſs, as well as our future, depend upon this belief of God, and love to him, and hopes of his favour; that were it not for this, the preſent World with all the imaginary pleaſures and glories of it would appear to all wiſe and good men, not only an empty dull unſatisfactory place, but a diſmal melancholy priſon. If it was ſuppos'd that all things here were the effects of blind Chance, or fatal Neceſſity, and that there were no Wiſdom and Goodneſs that did preſide over the World, or took care of Mankind; no conſidering man could deſire to live here.

The *Second* thing I would leave with you, is this, That after you have got into your minds a hearty ſence of God and his Providence, and his preſence and goodneſs; ſo as that you mean to make it the buſineſs of your lives to recommend your ſelves to him: you would in the next place, take care to keep up that ſenſe by *a conſtant and daily Worſhip of him.*

For God's ſake, and for your own Souls ſake, do not neglect your Prayers. You muſt never think that God will bleſs you, if you do not make a Conſcience of daily paying him your tribute of Honour and Worſhip.

Be ſure therefore, you be conſtant in your private Devotions. As you every day receive the renewed pledges of God's love and goodneſs towards you in a thouſand inſtances: ſo let every day your affection and gratitude be expreſs'd to him, by hearty Prayer and Thankſgiving. This is abſolutely neceſſary to be done, as I have often told you, if you mean to preſerve any hearty ſenſe of Religion in your minds.

But beſides this I have another thing to recommend to all thoſe that have Families. They are Heads and Governours of a *Society*. For indeed the firſt notion of *Society* is that of a *Family*. Every Family is a little Kingdom, and every Kingdom is or ought to be a great Family. Now is it natural, is it decent, that there ſhould be any Society upon earth wherein God ſhould not be owned and worſhipped? And yet woe be to us, how many thouſands of Families are there in this Kingdom, nay, I am afraid, even in and about this City, wherein God is not ſo much as named in publick, unleſs perhaps by the way of affront, by the way of *Curſing* or *Swearing*.

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We deſervedly complain of the great looſeneſs and profaneneſs and irreligion that hath overſpread the face of this Nation. O! I doubt a great deal of the blame of it lies upon the Houſholders, the Maſters of Families among us. If they would take better care of their Children and Servants, and let them know what it is to worſhip God, things would not be ſo bad among us. But how can we expect better, when there is no Religion either taught or practiſed in our houſes. We give our domeſticks opportunities enough, of learning all our bad qualities; but we give them none of learning our good ones, if we have any.

They ſee us offending God by many raſh words and ſinful actions; but they do not ſee us repenting, and asking God's pardon by our ſolemn Prayers and applications to the Throne of Grace. Let us therefore ſeriouſly lay this point to heart. I am ſure we have juſt cauſe to do it. Let us bring Religion into our Families, and not be contented that once a week ſome of our people in their turns ſhould hear ſomething of it. Let us every day call our family together, and pay our common tribute of Prayer and Praiſe for the mercies we do daily receive in common.

Methinks our Saviour ſeemed to have a reſpect to this very duty, and to charge it mightily upon us, when he made us that gracious pro-

miſe that even, *where two or three were gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midſt of them.* Sure, his words have moſt naturally a reſpect to the worſhip of God that is perform'd in Families. As hath likewiſe the very contrivance of the Lord's Prayer: all the Petitions thereof being ſo framed, as to be moſt proper to be ſaid by more than one, and yet too when we have ſhut our doors for that purpoſe. But,

Thirdly, As you ought to take care about the worſhip of God in your Cloſets and in your Families; let me add, that it equally concerns you to frequent the more publick worſhip of God in his own houſe. It is a bad ſign of ſome very ill Principle or other, for any man to be much a ſtranger there. Even to have the liberty and opportunity of worſhipping God in publick, is one of the greateſt bleſſings and priviledges that we can have in this World; and hath by good men always been ſo accounted. Now ſure, if we have this Notion of it, we ſhall think our ſelves mightily concerned to take all opportunities that come in our way, not only on Sundays, but on other days, of reſorting to the publick Aſſemblies, and joyning with them in the ſolemn ſacrifice of Prayer and Thankſgiving; and thinking it a good day to us wherein we have thus employed our ſelves.

The Sacrifices of this kind that we offer to God

God with an honeſt and devout mind, we cannot doubt will always find acceptance, and produce their effects; nay perhaps when our Cloſet-prayers will not. For there are certainly more promiſes to *publick* prayers than to *private* ones. Tho' yet both are very good, nay both are abſolutely neceſſary. But to proceed,

Fourthly, Being upon this Argument of the means and inſtruments of Religion, you may be ſure I cannot omit the mentioning of another thing, as one of thoſe points that I would moſt ſeriouſly recommend to you, and that is the ſolemn obſervation of the Lord's Day.

I am not for laying ſtreſs upon the keeping of this day, or any other, more than the nature of the thing requires. I am ſenſible that the doctrine about the obſervation of the Sabbath, as it is delivered by ſome Men, is ſuperſtitious enough, and oftentimes, where it is believed, proves rather a ſnare to mens Conſciences, than of uſe to make them more Religious. Far therefore am I from deſiring you to be nice and ſcrupulous about the *Punctilio*'s of the Lord's day ſervice. The Laws both of God and men have in that matter left a great deal to your own diſcretion, and the circumſtances you are in. But however thus much is neceſſary, that every man who profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian ſhould bear a conſtant Religious regard to the Lord's Day,

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by devoting it to ſpiritual uſes, more eſpecially the publick worſhip of God.

I do not much doubt of the truth of the obſervation which ſome good men have made, *viz.* That a man ſhall proſper much better both in his Spiritual and Temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful obſervance of the Lord's day. And I am likewiſe of opinion that thoſe men have little or no ſenſe of Religion, that make no conſcience of ſanctifying that day, or that put no difference between it and other days. Sure I am, were there nothing of a divine command for the ſetting apart this day to Religious uſes (which yet I believe there is); yet it is one of the moſt prudent and uſeful Conſtitutions that ever was made. So that even upon that account, all men that have any honour for God, or zeal for the publick good, ſhould think themſelves obliged to obſerve it.

The benefits of it are indeed unſpeakable. Not to mention the Civil or Temporal conveniences of it; in truth to the keeping up the Religion of this day we owe in a great meaſure that the very Face of Chriſtianity hath hitherto been preſerved among us. And were it not for this, for any thing I know, moſt of us in a very few years would become little better than Heathens & Barbarians. And ſo great an influence towards the making men better, or at leaſt keeping them from grow-

growing worſe, hath this practice always had; that you may obſerve the moſt profligate men among us, who for their wickedneſs come to an untimely end, do generally impute their falling into thoſe ſins which cauſed their death, to their breaking the Sabbath, as they commonly expreſs it. But,

Fifthly, Let me upon this occaſion put you in mind of another thing, which by many of us is too much neglected. And that is, the taking all opportunities of coming to the holy Sacrament.

I have often ſpoken to you about this matter, and I now deſire to remind you of it. There are little hopes you will ever make any great progreſs in vertue and holineſs, till you can bring your ſelves to a frequent and conſtant participation in this holy Myſtery. Becauſe indeed this is the ſolemn Ordinance that Chriſt hath appointed for the conveying his grace to us, and inabling us to overcome our ſins, and grow daily in vertue and goodneſs.

I know we have generally many and inveterate prejudices as to this matter. But aſſure your ſelves they are meer prejudices and no good reaſons. Every man that means and deſigns honeſtly, and endeavours to lead his life as a Chriſtian ought to do, may certainly with as little ſcruple come every Month to the Communion,

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as he may come every Week to ſay his Prayers or hear a Sermon. Nay, and I ſay further, if a man do not ſo lead his life, that he may approach to the Sacrament every Month, nay every Week, nay every Day, if there be occaſion; I am afraid that he doth not live ſo, as to be fit for it, tho' he comes but once in a year, or once in ſeven years. For the dueneſs of your preparation doth not depend upon your ſetting aſide ſo many extraordinary days for the forcing your ſelves into a Religious poſture of mind, but upon the plain natural frame and temper of your ſouls, as they conſtantly ſtand inclined to vertue and goodneſs. A man that ſeriouſly indeavours to live honeſtly and religiouſly may come to the Sacrament at an hours warning, and be a worthy Receiver. On the other ſide, a man that lives a careleſs or a ſenſual life may ſet apart a whole Week or a whole Month, for the exerciſing Repentance, and preparing himſelf for the Communion, and yet not be ſo worthy a Receiver as the other. And yet he may be a worthy Receiver too, provided he be really honeſt and ſincere in the matter he goes about; and provided that he remember his vows afterward, and do not ſink again into his former ſtate of careleſneſs and ſenſuality.

But to return to my point. I do verily think that moſt of the doubts and fears and ſcruples

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that are commonly entertained among us about receiving the Sacrament, are without ground or reaſon; and that every well diſpoſed perſon that hath no other deſign in that action but to do his duty to God, and to expreſs his belief and hopes in Jeſus Chriſt, and his thankfulneſs to God for him, may as ſafely at any time come to the Lord's table, as he may come to Church to ſay his prayers. And if the caſe be ſo (as I believe it is) then of what a mighty priviledge and benefit do they deprive themſelves, who when they have ſo many opportunities, do ſo ſeldom joyn in that ſolemn Inſtitution of our Lord, which (as, I ſaid) was deſign'd for no other purpoſe, but to be the means of our growing in grace and vertue, in love to God and to all the World.

O therefore my Brethren, let me beg of you not to be ſtrangers at the Lord's Table. But I need not beg it of you, for I am ſure you will not, whenſoever it ſhall pleaſe God to put it into your hearts ſeriouſly to mind the concernments of your Souls, and to be heartily ſenſible of the need you ſtand in of the grace of Chriſt for the leading a holy and pure life.

I have but one thing more in the *Sixth* place, to leave with you, and I have done. It is not indeed of the nature of thoſe things I have laſt recommended to you, that is, a means or inſtrument of growing more vertuous: but it is a

principal vertue it ſelf. And I do therefore recommend it to you, becauſe it is at all times uſeful, at all times ſeaſonable, but more eſpecially it ſeems to be ſo now: And that is, that you would walk in Love, and ſtudy Peace and Unity, and live in all dutiful ſubjection to thoſe whom God hath ſet over you, and endeavour in your ſeveral ſtations to promote the publick Happineſs and Tranquillity as much as is poſſible: But by no means upon any pretence whatſoever to diſturb the publick Peace, or to be any way concerned with them that do; by no means ever to ingage in any party or faction, and leaſt of all any faction in Religion, which is grounded upon a State-point.

I am ſorry the poſture of things among us gives me occaſion to mention this matter; but it is too viſible to what a height our animoſities and diſcontents are grown, and what the conſequences of them may be, unleſs there be a timely ſtop put to them, I tremble to think.

With mens differences as to their notions about the Politicks I am not concern'd; let men frame what *Hypotheſes* they pleaſe about Government, tho' I do not like them, yet I do not think my ſelf bound to Preach againſt them. But when theſe differences are come to that paſs, that they threaten both the Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Peace, there I think no Miniſter ſhould be ſilent.

Church-

Church-diviſions God knows we have, and have always had too many, but it is very grievous that thoſe who have always declared themſelves the friends of our Church and enemies to Schiſm, ſhould at this time of day, ſet their helping hand to promote a Separation.

And yet it ſeems to this height are our differences come. Some people among us that formerly were very zealous for the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the Church, are now all of a ſudden ſo diſtaſted with it, that they make a ſcruple of being preſent at our Service. Nay, ſome have proceeded ſo far as to declare, I know not upon what grounds, open war againſt us, and ſet up *Separate* Congregations in oppoſition to the *Publick*.

What is the meaning of this? hath *Schiſm* and *Separation* from the eſtabliſhed Worſhip, which heretofore was branded as ſo hainous a ſin (and deſervedly too,) ſo changed its nature all of a ſudden, that it is become not only innocent but a duty?

Have we not the ſame Government both in Church and State that we formerly had? Have we not the ſame Articles and Doctrines of Religion publickly owned and profeſſed and taught, without the leaſt alteration? Have we not the ſame Liturgy, the ſame Offices and Prayers uſed every day that have always been? What is

there then to ground a ſeparation upon?

Yes, *But the names in the Prayers are changed, and we cannot pray for thoſe that are now in Authority, as we could for thoſe that were heretofore.*

But how unreaſonable is this, when S. *Paul* has bid us to put up *prayers and ſupplications and interceſſions for all men*, eſpecially *for Kings and all that are in Authority.* Doth he make any reſtriction, any diſtinction what *Kings*, or what *perſons in Authority* we are to pray for, and what not? Doth he not expreſly ſay, we muſt pray for *all men, and for all that are in authority*? And doth not the reaſon of his exhortation imply as much, if his words did not? Namely, *that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty?*

But I pray conſider what this Doctrine leads to. If this principle be admitted to be good Divinity, then farewel all the obligations to Eccleſiaſtical Communion among Chriſtians. For what Government is there in the World that will not meet with ſuch Subjects as are not ſatisfied with it? and if that diſſatisfaction be a juſt reaſon to break Communion with the Eſtabliſhed Church, what Ligaments have we to tye Chriſtians together? What will become of *holding the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace?* What is the conſequence of this, but endleſs Schiſms and Separations?

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But further, I wiſh theſe Perſons would conſider what an unaccountable humour it is, to make a Rent and Schiſm in the Church, upon a meer point of State.

Great Revolutions have happen'd in all Ages and in all Countries, and we have frequent inſtances of them in ſtory. But I believe it will not be eaſily found that ever any Chriſtians ſeparated from the Church upon account of them. Still they kept unanimouſly to their Doctrine and their Worſhip, and never concerned themſelves farther in the Turns of State (how great ſoever they were) than peaceably to ſubmit to the Powers in being, and heartily to pray to God ſo to proſper their Government, and direct all their affairs, that all their Subjects *might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.* But when in a Revolution, a Prince was advanced to the Throne, that they looked upon to be a good man, and an encourager of the True Religion; in that caſe they did not only readily ſubmit to him, but acknowledged it as the great bleſſing of God to them, that he had raiſed up ſuch a Man to rule over them. This was the Notion, and this was the Practice of the Primitive Chriſtians as to this matter, I may indeed ſay of the Chriſtians in all Ages. And whatever you may have heard to the contrary, I doubt not to ſay that this is

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the very Doctrine of the Church of *England*.

Let me therefore exhort all of you to be followers of Peace; to promote publick Unity and Concord as much as is poſſible; to ſtudy to be quiet and mind your own buſineſs; to be more concerned for your Country and Nation than the Intereſt of any ſingle man in it; heartily to ſubmit to the Government; and not only ſo, but to thank God for the Bleſſings you enjoy under it, and moſt earneſtly to pray for the Continuance of them: Laſtly, never to eſpouſe any party or faction againſt the Government, nor ever to be driven away from the Communion of the Church, of which you have always profeſſed your ſelves members, by any of the pretences which ſome warm men may ſuggeſt to you. This I dare venture to ſay, how uneaſie ſoever ſome of you now may be in joyning with our prayers, you will at laſt be ten times more uneaſie in ſeparating from us. For Faction has no bounds, and God knows whither it will lead a man at laſt. Were there nothing elſe but the Heat and Turbulency, the Paſſion and Peeviſhneſs, the bitter Zeal and Uncharitableneſs that the being of a Party doth naturally ingage men in: I ſay, were there nothing elſe but this, No man that conſults the peace of his own mind, would for any conſideration leave the publick Communion and eſpouſe the cauſe of a ſeparate

Intereſt:

Interest. But there are worse Consequences than these, and I pray God we may never feel them.

And now I have done with my Exhortation. I have spoke my thoughts very freely to you. And I hope you will receive what I have said with the same kindness that I meant it. And truely I have no reason to doubt of it, after so long an experience as I have had of your Civility and Candor. Indeed during all the time I have been among you (which hath been now near Sixteen years) I have been so kindly treated by you, and have received so many Testimonies of your Good-will, that I cannot but take this Opportunity of publickly acknowledging my Obligations to you, and returning you my Solemn Thanks for Them.

I cannot indeed say that I have done my duty as I ought, and I heartily beg of God to forgive all my defects. But I have this satisfaction, that I have sincerely endeavoured in all my Preaching, to instruct you in the true doctrine of the Gospel, and to teach you the right way that leads to Salvation. And I am so certain, that I have not been mistaken my self, nor mis-led you in that matter; that I dare with Confidence address my self to you in some of the words of the Apostle, which do immediately follow after my Text: *Viz. Those things which*

you have learned and received and heard from me, do; and the God of peace ſhall be with you.

I ſhall ever bleſs God for that Providence of his which placed me among you; and as I ſhall always, and do, earneſtly deſire all your prayers for me; ſo I ſhall always heartily pray for you. That God would guide and proſper you; that his good Providence would always watch over you for Good; that he would beſtow upon you and your Children after you all ſorts of Bleſſings needful and convenient for you; and eſpecially that he would deliver you from every evil work, and preſerve you to his Heavenly Kingdom. This God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

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